WebBuyer

SITE REVIEWS

SITE REVIEWS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING

COMPILED BY KEVIN SAVETZ AND ABIGAIL CRANE

PC SHOPPING SITES

The sites in this listing sell products from multiple manufacturers. See the sites under "PC Direct Vendors," or check the *Computer Shopper* Source Directory ***(cgi.zdnet.com/slink?8145)***, for more information on PC manufacturers offering only their own brands (such as Dell and Gateway).

aberdeeninc.com

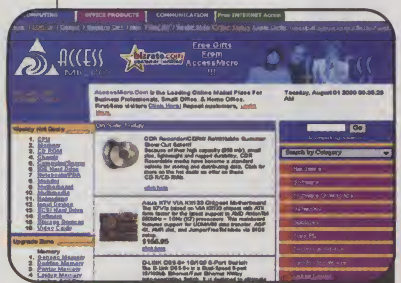
volume pricing • smooth navigation • easy ordering
limited software selection

Built for the savvy consumer who craves technical information, **Aberdeen** offers extensive specs on a wide variety of computers and accessories.

accessmicro.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Shoppers will enjoy the selection at **Access Micro,** which offers 45,000 items ranging from memory to T1 routers. The help desk and hardware guide provide aid to first-time visitors.



www.applied-computer.com

smooth navigation
handling fee on orders under $200

Selling PCs and supplies since 1984, **Applied Computer** promises to match or beat any advertised price. The company stocks 800,000 products—check the site's list of the 1,000 most popular ones.

blackbox.com

smooth navigation

Specializing in cabling and network-connectivity products, **Black Box's** extensive 900-page catalog of storage, LAN, switch, surge-protection, and other accessories can be viewed online or off.

buy.com

price-matching policy • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

You'll find everything from computers and software to electronics, books, movies, music, and video games at this monstrous, multifaceted site. **Buy.com** sells a whopping 850,000 items. Despite the site's mind-blowing selection, shopping is fast and efficient.

cablestogo.com

hard-to-find tools and test equipment
$30 minimum order requirement

Cables To Go sells every conceivable cable, cord, or wire your PC might need, from standard SCSI to esoteric system-specific cables. You'll also find networking products and all sorts of adapters.

cdw.com

list of rebates and coupons • business leasing options available • smooth navigation • easy ordering

CDW offers an impressive array of hardware and software. The comparison tool lets shoppers create side-by-side comparisons in many product categories.

compuplus.com

easy ordering • good return policy

Comp-U-Plus highlights its customer service, offering a 30-day money-back guarantee and free technical support. Its catalog isn't the biggest, but plenty of name brands are represented, and prices are reasonable.

compusa.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

CompUSA is a well-organized site offering a fair amount of PC hardware, accessories, and software, with electronics and video-game gadgets rounding out the selection. Don't overlook the site's clearance section.

computability.com

handy side-by-side product-comparison tool • smooth navigation • easy ordering

Beginning its mail-order business in 1982, **ComputAbility** has aged considerably better than the Commodore 64 you bought that year. The site offers desktop, notebook, and handheld computers, plus a wide variety of peripherals and software.

computercomputer.com

easy ordering

Interested in buying components and piecing together your own PC? **Computercomputer.com** sells bare-bones systems that make a good starting point.

computers4sure.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The 15 well-stocked departments at **Computers4Sure.com** include networking equipment, peripherals, PDAs, scanners, and more—the selection spans 60,000 products. Fast and intuitive, the site delivers handy features

www.officemax.com

Computer Shopper Best Site Award October 2000

Whether you need a palette of PDAs or just a box of low-tech paper clips, you'll find it at **OfficeMax.** The site sells an enormous variety of paper products, writing instruments, furniture, office machines, and technology products. To simplify supply shopping, you can enter the manufacturer and model of your fax machine, copier, or printer, and the site will generate a list of compatible items—toner, paper, and so on.

OfficeMax also provides useful articles (such as "Stress Reduction for Entrepreneurs") and buying guides (on topics ranging from buying envelopes to choosing a CD burner). A simple all-in-one rebate form makes it easy to apply for manufacturers' discounts and other special offers. In addition, some products feature no-forms instant rebates.

OfficeMax offers free next-day delivery on orders totaling more than $50. Many product categories are covered by a low-price guarantee, which promises to match competitors' prices and give you a credit for 55 percent of the difference.

OfficeMax partners with affiliates in the MaxSolutions section of the site to provide financial services, a unified messaging center, and printing services. Registered users can access My OfficeMax, a centralized tool for maintaining shipping addresses, billing information, and other account details. A complete history of past orders is available.

OFFICEMAX
Main focus: Office supplies, furniture, technology products
Additional categories: Software, business services
Number of products offered: 20,000

for choosy shoppers. Bargain hunters can quickly sniff out deals on the Special Offers and Clearance pages.

computershopper.com

smooth navigation

Computer Shopper's own computer-buying site, **computershopper.com,** provides access to product reviews, interactive guides to choosing a desktop or a notebook, and How to Buy sections for the most popular product categories.

computersurplusoutlet.com

consignment service

Frugal shoppers and do-it-yourselfers will feel at home at **Computer Surplus Outlet,** a computer hardware liquidator. The company sells closeouts, overstocks, refurbished equipment, and liquidation items at bargain-basement prices. You can find complete, assembly-required Pentium systems for less than $100.

cqk.com

smooth navigation

Designed for folks who know what they want, **Computer Quick** offers plain-box, best-buy, and closeout merchandise in addition to a selection of more than 90,000 items in regular stock.

cyberrebate.com

"100% Off" tab shows 300 products whose rebates equal their cost. • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

rebates take 10 to 14 weeks to process

CyberRebate.com only sells products that come with money-back rebates. You'll find a small selection of computer accessories and software. In addition, the site offers electronics, office supplies, toys, and kitchen items.

cyberwarehouse.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

may take up to three days to ship

onvia.com

Onvia.com bills itself as a business-to-business marketplace. Indeed, it offers many business-oriented features that distinguish it as a small-business resource rather than a traditional online computer-products store.

The site's selection of computer hardware, software, and office products spans 37,000 items. In-stock products are shipped within one to two days of the order, and frequent free shipping deals help keep transaction costs down. Shoppers are covered by the company's 30-day price-protection guarantee: Any purchase can be returned for any reason for a full refund within 30 days.

The site's Request for Quote marketplace is a small-business-services trading hub that you can use to seek out the services of a copywriter, an insurance provider, or any of a dozen other types of professionals. Buying guides will help you make an informed choice, whether you're in search of a janitor or a photocopier service technician.

The Auctions area allows members to buy and sell inventory in categories that include aircraft, real estate, and industrial equipment. The site's informative News & Tools section features business news, expert advice, product reviews, and community forums. You can even zoom in on business news in your particular industry or region.

ONVIA.COM
Main focus: Computer and office products
Additional categories: Auctions, business services
Number of products offered: 37,000
Areas of development: Web hosting for small businesses

SITE REVIEWS

If you're the kind of shopper who can't pass up a bargain-basement sale or an outlet mall, this site may be for you. **CyberWarehouse** offers PCs, monitors, printers, and other peripherals.

www.dalco.com

international and APO/FPO orders • smooth navigation

Dalco stocks everything from motherboards to monitors. Bargain hunters will want to start with this site's specials, which are shown on the home page and change regularly.

www.damark.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Damark offers a variety of PCs and notebooks, as well as accessories, digital cameras, and home electronics. Factory-serviced items are available, and the outlet area delivers low prices on items in short supply.

direct411.com

easy ordering

Direct411 offers an impressive selection of 50,000 in-stock hardware and software products. The catalog includes servers, memory upgrades, storage devices, digital cameras, and software.

dirtcheapdrives.com

detailed archive of technical-support information • quantity discounts available • smooth navigation • easy ordering

If you can store data on it, this site sells it. **Dirt Cheap Drives** offers deals on hard drives, CD-ROM and DVD hardware, drive arrays, and hard-to-find laptop storage. This 10-year-old company also stocks mounting kits, media, and other accessories.

ecost.com

same-day shipment on most orders • photos and warranty details for most products • smooth navigation • easy ordering

The **eCost.com** catalog spans the full realm of PC hardware and software, including ready-to-use systems, peripherals, accessories, software, and games. Featured specials in each category point shoppers to the best deals, and fastidiously organized subcategories help them find the exact products they need.

egghead.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Egghead.com shoppers can browse the hardware, software, and electronics superstores, or check out the deals on surplus computer merchandise. In addition, the site also sells home electronics, sports and fitness merchandise, and travel packages.

electrified.com

30-day guarantee on all items • se habla español • good return policy

Looking for deep discounts on older laptops, notebooks, monitors, and printers? **Electrified** specializes in products that are discontinued, second-inventory, refurbished, off-lease, or otherwise not state-of-the-art. Systems range from new Pentium II laptops to under-$200 used 486s.

elinux.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The **eLinux.com** site offers hardware and software for users of the Linux operating system. Desktop and notebook systems for sale here have been tested with Linux and don't come bundled with that "other" OS.

firstsource.com

real-time online customer service • smooth navigation • easy ordering

Focused on the technology needs of businesses, **Firstsource** offers a broad range of choices in computer hardware, rack-mount systems, network tools,

phone systems, wiring, and business software.

gogocity.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

You'll get beyond **GoGoCity.com's** funny name when you see its excellent selection of computer hardware. You'll find desktop and notebook computers, peripherals, software, and PC accessories of all types. Detailed product information, often with pictures, rounds out the catalog.

www.handgear.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Handgear offers a small selection of Palm hardware, plus other mobile-computing accessories and software.

insight.com

separate sites for the U.S., Canada, Germany, and the U.K. • smooth navigation • easy ordering

With more than 100,000 items, **Insight** offers an impressive and easy-to-navigate catalog of hardware and software products. More than 100 free newsletters feature new-product news, closeout specials, and tech news.

www.jandr.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Whether you're shopping for an Aptiva or an iMac, hardware and accessories abound at **J&R Computer World,** making this a one-stop shop for many. You'll also find a huge selection of digital and traditional film cameras.

laptoptravel.com

smooth navigation

Laptop Travel sells portable-computing and international travel gear, including electrical adapters, modem converters and couplers, and security accessories. You'll find traditional and "camouflaged" laptop carrying cases, laptop RAM, and storage add-ons.

thelinuxstore.com

smooth navigation

If your PC is "penguin-powered," **The Linux Store** might be your place to shop. The site offers a small selection of hardware and software that's compatible with the popular alternative operating system. The community area offers Linux news, free downloads, and Web links.

mcglen.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

McGlen Micro's specialized searches can help you find memory and other accessories compatible with your computer, printer, and copier. Shoppers can design a custom system to be built and shipped in two days.

megahaus.com

lifetime technical support on all products • CD-mastering and other utility software • smooth navigation

MegaHaus calls itself "the drive authority." It offers a wide variety of storage solutions, including hard drives, DVD drives, RAID, and removable storage. A technical-information area features FAQs and specifications on hardware ranging from DVD players to drive brackets.

mei-microcenter.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

MEI-Micro Center offers new and refurbished desktops from Compaq, eMachines, Hewlett Packard, and PowerSpec. There's also a small selection of peripherals. Rummage around the bargain bin for deals on closeouts, refurbished units, and overstocks.

memman.com

all memory carries a lifetime warranty • smooth navigation • good return policy

When it's time to upgrade the memory in your desktop or laptop, don't forget **Memory Man.** Besides memory chips, the site sells processors, motherboards, hard drives, heat sinks, and batteries for many types of notebooks.

memory4less.com

company tests all products shipped • smooth navigation

Memory4Less offers low prices on a wide variety of RAM, including older, hard-to-find types. If you don't know the memory requirements of your computer or digital camera, it will tell you.

SITE REVIEWS

The site also sells CPUs, motherboards, and laptop hard drives.

microx-press.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

MicroX-Press offers detailed information about most products, as well as a handy "E-mail me when this product is priced at…" feature and a configuration tool. Customers are invited to rate and review products they've tried.

www.mobile-mania.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Digital cameras, e-mail devices, PDAs, cases, and adapters of all sorts are available for folks on the go at **Mobile Mania.**

mobileplanet.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Offering gadgets for mobile professionals, **MobilePlanet** is home to a gaggle of high-tech tools and toys. The selection includes handheld and notebook computers, PDAs, wireless communication products, and travel-size printers and scanners—plus countless accessories for each.

motherboards.com

With a wide selection of motherboards from nine manufacturers, do-it-yourselfers can pick the perfect innards for their new PCs at **Motherboards.com.** This Web store offers CPUs, memory, graphics cards, drives, and other internal essentials.

www.mwave.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Multiwave Direct's friendly site sells a multitude of hardware and software products. In addition to PC systems and peripherals, this Web store stocks notebook accessories, videoconferencing equipment, and network tools.

www.necx.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering
$25 surcharge for phone orders

NECX offers all manner of hardware, accessories, and software. The Showcases section highlights products in specialty categories, such as PDAs or USB peripherals. The How to Buy guides offer impartial advice on selecting and installing common PC add-ons.

neutronet.com

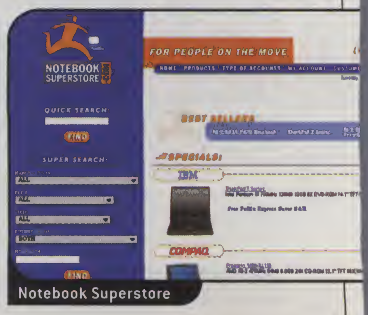
purchases earn credit points toward your next order • smooth navigation • easy ordering

Neutron Computers carries thousands of computer systems and peripherals from nearly 400 different manufacturers and distributors. The site's handy toolbox offers easy access to best buys, help for first-time buyers, and a massive manufacturer directory.

www.notebooksuperstore.com

devoted exclusively to portable computers • easy ordering

Notebook Superstore sells more than 90 different laptop models from eight manufacturers. You'll see technical details about each model, and a comparison tool helps you zero in on the best portable for your needs. Corporate accounts receive lease options and volume discounts.



Notebook Superstore

123cdc.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Computer Discount Center offers a wide variety of PC add-ons, including storage, digital cameras, and displays. Shoppers will find competitive prices and detailed product information.

officedepot.com

free next-day delivery on orders of more than $50 within local trading areas • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Office Depot sells everything for the office: file folders to filing cabinets, briefcases to bookcases. The site's computer category offers a selection of prebuilt machines from major

manufacturers. Office Depot provides free downloadable business forms, letter templates, and spreadsheet templates.

www.officemax.com

Best Site winner this month. See p. 180.

onvia.com

Best Site winner this month. See p. 181.

outpost.com

Best Site winner this month. See below.

www.palmgear.com

👍 mailing lists offer news, specials, and user tips • smooth navigation

Palm-device users will appreciate the extensive selection of free and commercial downloadable programs at **PalmGear H.Q.** The site features lists of the newest Palm programs, as well as essential software picks. Shoppers can buy handheld hardware and accessories, including carrying cases and styli.

SITE REVIEWS

www.thepartsfinder.com

👍 smooth navigation
👎 minimum $75 order

A friendly site that uses a graphical interface to simplify finding CPU fans, power supplies, cables, and screws, **The Parts Finder** is targeted at computer hobbyists and corporate buyers. Even the most mundane parts, such as bezels, fans, and batteries, are listed.

pcconnection.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering

In business for more than 15 years, **PC Connection** offers good deals on a colossal variety of products. Smart Selectors ease the searching process for shoppers looking for systems, cameras, printers, monitors, or memory to fit specific guidelines.

pcmall.com

👍 free lifetime technical support • smooth navigation • easy ordering

Many folks are familiar with **PC Mall's** thick, colorful catalog, and the online version is just as dense. PC Mall has a vast selection of computers, hardware, and software.

pcprogress.com

👍 smooth navigation

If you're in the market for PC components and peripherals, check out **PC Progress.** The site specializes in cost-effective memory, with a lifetime warranty. You'll find a large selection of memory, including notebook, iMac, and printer RAM.

pcstop.com

This purveyor of hardware and software offers 50,000 computer-related products from 1,300 manufacturers. **PC Stop's** unusual interface makes shoppers start with a search—you can't just browse.

pcwonders.com

👍 corporate and educational accounts available • smooth navigation • easy ordering

At **pcWonders.com,** you'll find more than 90,000 hardware and software products. Additional categories include car audio, home electronics, PDAs, and bargain blowouts.

pczone.com

👍 printable rebate coupons • smooth navigation • easy ordering
👎 handling fee on smaller orders

PC Zone boasts an impressive product selection of all things PC-related, including desktops, notebooks, printers, monitors, storage devices, CPU upgrades, and network equipment—plus PDAs, digital cameras, and handheld MP3 players. You'll also find links to a clearance area and other stores: **Mac Zone** and **Zones Business Solutions.**

provantage.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Provantage offers PC products from more than 1,000 manufacturers. The selection includes software, hardware, books, and training materials. The site's Personal Tracking List feature lets customers build a list of product bookmarks, then monitor the products' prices and availability.

www.qualityclick.com

👍 leasing options • easy ordering • good return policy

The **Quality Click** Web store covers all the basics for the PC user, including hardware, networking supplies, accessories, and software. Technical support is available through a toll-free phone number, fax, or e-mail, and there is sales support over live chat.

shopper.cnet.com

The **CNET Shopper** search engine takes the guesswork out of finding a deal on hardware, software, and accessories. The site tracks the prices of more than 200,000 products in 100 stores.

shoppingplanet.com

👍 smooth navigation

Do-it-yourselfers will appreciate **Shopping Planet's** inventory of barebones systems, add-on cards, and kits. An arm of the site that specializes in software and hardware for the Linux operating system is available at ***shoppingplanet.com/cm/linux.asp.***

www.sparco.com

👍 smooth navigation • easy ordering

Sparco's catalog of more than 130,000 products makes it simple to shop for computer equipment. Looking for that something extra? Check out the list of products that come bundled with "free stuff."

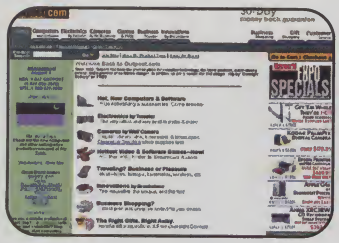
www.spidergear.com

Spider Gear offers new and refurbished computers, cameras, home audio and video products, car-audio

outpost.com

The breadth of products at **Outpost.com** will impress. For instance, the site sells a wide selection of computer hardware and software, personal electronics, and office products. The selection of PCs includes preconfigured desktop and notebook computers from Acer, Apple, Compaq, and other major manufacturers. A full complement of peripherals, accessories, and software is also available.

The Innovations area offers home and garden, health and fitness, travel, and auto products. In the Games section you'll find playtime activities for PC, Mac, and console gamers. Under the Electronics tab are home audio and video products, camcorders, phones, and portable electronics. The Cameras section peddles traditional and digital cameras, telescopes, and digital-imaging products.

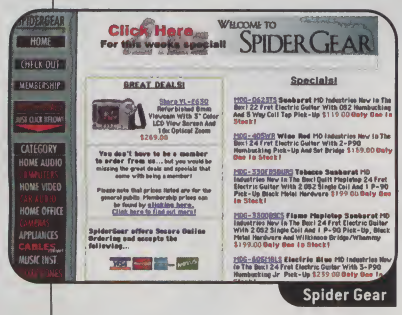


Regardless of what you're shopping for, you'll enjoy a detailed description of each item that includes features, system requirements, and images. And Outpost.com does more than present itself well: It works hard to earn customer satisfaction with policies like a 30-day money-back guarantee and free overnight delivery.

We placed an order one Friday afternoon and were greeted the very next day by an Airborne Express truck delivering the goods. For those in a big hurry, Outpost offers same-day delivery in selected areas, but you'll have to pay for it.

OUTPOST.COM
Main focus: Computers and software
Additional categories: Electronics, cameras, business products
Number of products offered: 170,000
Areas of development: Site to offer custom-configured Micron PCs

items, and appliances. A $10 optional membership entitles you to reduced prices, an annual rebate, and advance notice of new products.



Spider Gear

www.ssdonline.com

the E-list service stores your product preferences • smooth navigation

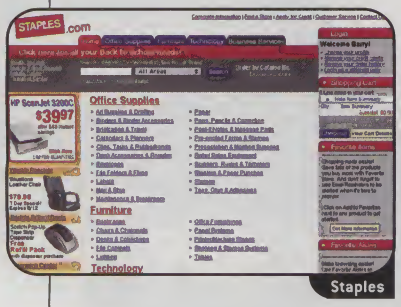
At **State Street Direct's** Web store, shoppers will discover a huge selection of consumer electronics in addition to computers and imaging products. Digital photographers will find many items of interest.

State Street Direct

staples.com

peruse your history of past purchases, even months later • liberal price-matching policy • smooth navigation • good return policy

Even if a **Staples** store is just down the block, you might prefer this elegant Web site when shopping for computer accessories, software, and office supplies. If you order similar items often, you can set up personalized lists to avoid filling out a new form every time.



Staples

SITE REVIEWS

2for1inkjet.com

free shipping on orders of six or more items, or at least $200 • smooth navigation • good return policy

If your printer is putting you in the poorhouse, pay a visit to **2 For 1 Inkjet,** where you'll find two-for-one supplies for every brand of inkjet and laser printer, copier, and fax machine.

3re.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Specializing in used computers and rebuilt electronic equipment, **3Re.com** takes open-box returns from original equipment manufacturers and repairs and repackages the machines. Offerings include desktops, notebooks, printers, monitors, network equipment, and software.

tccomputers.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

In business since 1988, **TC Computers** sells fully configured systems, motherboards, and name-brand peripherals. The company's specialty is motherboards—it tests each one prior to shipping and bundles a step-by-step installation video.

tcwo.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Thompson's Computer Warehouse Outlet Center offers "wholesale computer parts to the public." The selection is small—you may find only a dozen monitors or four CD-ROM drives—but the prices are fantastic. Browse the selection or print out a complete price sheet for easy reference.

techstore.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

TechStore offers hardware in dozens of categories, ranging from CPU upgrades to storage devices. The site also offers a wide range of software—everything from Microsoft applications to children's titles.

thortek.com

smooth navigation

An array of computer accessories awaits **ThorTek** shoppers, including hard drives, notebook upgrades, peripherals, and software.

tigerdirect.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

TigerDirect's site offers custom-built computers, tested and shipped within 48 hours. Shoppers in the mood for an adventure can order a build-it-yourself custom PC kit.

trudata.com

library of useful free software downloads • smooth navigation

True Data Technology's selection spans desktops, laptops, and palmtops, with an exceptional catalog of motherboards, hard drives, and other upgrade accessories. The site also features communication essentials for businesses, including DSL equipment and telephony products.

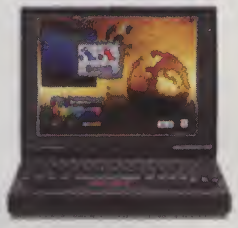
www.usbstuff.com

Looking for gadgets to plug into your new Universal Serial Bus-equipped computer? **USB Stuff** has it all, including digital cameras, CD-RW drives, printers, modems, hubs, input devices, cables, and adapters. A sister site at ***www.firewirestuff.com*** stocks IEEE 1394/FireWire-compatible hardware.

usedcomputer.com

index of nonprofit organizations accepting computer donations

Used Computer Mall is a marketplace for used computer equipment. Shoppers can list hardware to sell or look for items to buy using the free classified ads. The site can also help you appraise equipment.



warehouse.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The five "warehouses" under **MicroWarehouse's** roof sell PC hardware and software, Mac products, networking components, and supplies. The site provides corporate, educational, and government accounts. Business leases are available.

PC DIRECT VENDORS

axissys.com

The **Axis Systems** Web store offers a best-price guarantee on its preconfigured notebooks, servers, desktops, and workstations.

buyabs.com

systems available with Linux preinstalled • smooth navigation • good return policy

Offering exceptional customer support on quality desktop and notebook systems is the goal at **ABS.** Shoppers can custom-configure a wide variety of PCs.

buy-atlas.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

The **Atlas Micro** site sells a variety of preconfigured desktop PCs. Buyers can select from computers built around Pentium III, Celeron, and AMD processors.

cybermaxpc.com

downloadable drivers and online tech guide • smooth navigation • good return policy

CyberMax offers AMD- and Intel-based systems in a wide variety of configurations to suit almost every need. The

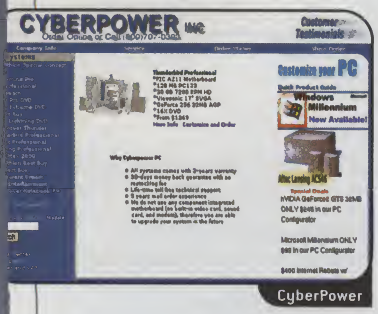
SECTION CONTINUES ON PAGE 191

choices range from speedy desktop machines for gamers to light laptops for business travelers.

cyberpowerinc.com

downloadable drivers • smooth navigation • good return policy

From the Transparent Dream to the Lightning Professional, the computers at **CyberPower** have names as good as their warranties—three years, with a 30-day money-back guarantee.



dell.com

online technical support customized for your particular system • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Carrying the online banner for one of the largest names in direct PC sales, **Dell** specializes in built-to-order desktop and notebook PCs. The site offers detailed specs, an online tour of each product, and copious customization options.

SITE REVIEWS

www.directplus.compaq.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Compaq DirectPlus carries desktops, portables, workstations, and servers. The Compaq Factory Outlet at ***www.compaqworks.com*** offers discounts on refurbished and new overstocked merchandise.

fpcdirect.fujitsu-pc.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Purchase **Fujitsu** notebook computers from the source. This Web site offers personal, business, and multimedia notebook computers, with several warranty options on each. Check the Refurbished Outlet for deals.

www.gateway.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

One of the biggest names in online computer sales, **Gateway** serves small businesses, corporations, educational institutions, government bodies, and home users. Its site sells desktops, portables, and a complete line of accessories.

ibm.com/shop

Linux available on laptop models • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Once synonymous with the phrase "personal computer," **IBM** still pushes the envelope. Its site offers business and home computers, notebooks, servers, thin clients, and the networking equipment to hook them all together.

kaypro.com

smooth navigation

Kaypro's first computer, released in the early '80s, used a Z-80 processor and ran the long-forgotten CP/M operating system. Today, the company's Web site sells decidedly more modern desktop computers, allowing shoppers to custom-configure Pentium III systems.

micronpc.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

One of the largest direct PC vendors, **micronpc.com** has a Web sales site broken into clear areas to suit many types of customers, including home-office users, large businesses, government buyers, and buyers outside the United States.

nutrend.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Custom-configure a home or business PC at **NuTrend.** The company offers a wide selection of desktop machines running your choice of Intel or AMD processors. Each system comes with a three-year warranty.

www.quantex.com

smooth navigation

Desktops, notebooks, servers, workstations, and peripherals—all are offered at **Quantex's** Web store. A community area allows Quantex PC users to keep in touch.

sagernotebook.com

leasing options available • smooth navigation • good return policy

Specializing in portable computers, **Sager** offers a variety of notebook-computing options, from budget-minded machines to speedy multimedia units. The one-year warranty includes a 72-hour repair-turnaround guarantee.

shopacer.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Notebooks, desktops, and accessories are for sale at **Acer's** site, in addition to ready-to-use PC bundles for home, business, and education.

shopprostar.com

downloadable drivers • smooth navigation • good return policy

Each computer in **ProStar's** line of notebook PCs is backed by a 30-day money-back guarantee, a speedy repair promise, and free tech support.

store.apple.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

Apple's easy-to-use online store allows buyers to custom-configure the company's Power Mac G4, PowerBook, iMac, and iBook computers. A wide array of Mac-compatible software and accessories is also available.

tiny.com

smooth navigation

Leading British PC maker **Tiny Computers** has joined the U.S. market. The company's line of prebuilt PCs ranges from beginner to professional models.

vaiodirect.sel.sony.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

VAIO Direct sells Sony's line of desktops, notebooks, digital cameras, displays, and storage devices. The Xtras Direct arm offers add-ons for PCs, digital cameras, and other equipment.

www.winbook.com

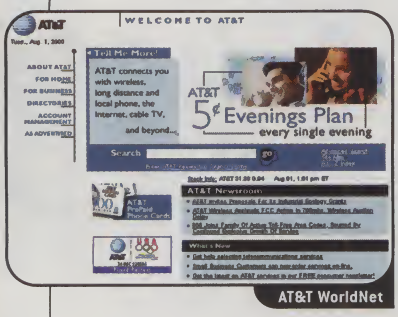
smooth navigation • good return policy

Focusing exclusively on notebook computers, ***WinBook*** *offers machines with* a 30-day money-back guarantee, a one-year warranty, and free technical support.

INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

www.att.net

AT&T WorldNet offers 450 local access numbers. The standard pricing plan is $19.95 per month for 150 hours of access. For $2 more, power users can get unlimited access. Families and Websmiths will appreciate the whopping 60MB of Web-page space and six e-mail addresses.

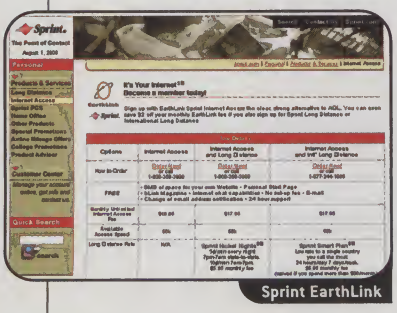


compuserve.com

Owned by America Online, **CompuServe** is aimed at professionals and is more powerful than AOL. Access is $9.95 per month for 20 hours, or $19.95 for unlimited access. Customers get seven e-mail addresses and 5MB of Web-page space.

csg.sprint.com/internet

Unlimited access to **Sprint EarthLink** costs $19.95 a month ($2 less if you are a Sprint long-distance customer). The service provides 6MB of Web-page space and an impressive 1,400 local access phone numbers nationwide.



free.msn.com

Displaying a recently revamped interface, **MSN Internet Access** costs $21.95 per month for unlimited access, and the first month is free. You'll also find more than 800 U.S. and international access numbers. The service is not available for Mac users. MSN provides 12MB for Web pages.

www.mciworld.com

MCI WorldCom offers more than 750 local access numbers across the United States. It costs $19.95 for up to 150 hours of access each month ($3 less if you are an MCI long-distance customer). Additional online time is 99 cents an hour.

www.newaol.com

Known for its ease of use, **America Online** is the nation's most popular ISP. It offers many pricing plans, including one for $21.95 per month that gives unlimited access. Extras include members-only forums, 14MB of Web-page space, and seven e-mailboxes.

prodigy.com

A $19.95 monthly fee buys unlimited access to **Prodigy Internet.** Low-usage and deluxe-access plans are also available. Users get 6MB of Web-page space. Accounts come with only one e-mail address, but you can add 10 more for $2 extra.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

www.americancentury.com

stock, bond, and option trading • retirement services • smooth navigation

Whether you're a conservative, moderate, or aggressive investor, **American Century** has a fund targeted to your needs.

ameritrade.com

sophisticated tools for options traders • smooth navigation

Offering a variety of IRAs, mutual funds, and other investment services, **Ameritrade** features low commissions for Internet, phone, and broker-assisted investing. Clients can receive timely information about stocks in their portfolios by e-mail, pager, or mobile phone.

bondsonline.com

daily bond-market commentary • daily pricing of U.S. Treasury securities

SITE REVIEWS

Bonds Online offers market information about tax-free municipal bonds, Treasury bonds, funds, and brokers. You can also buy software that will calculate the prices and yields of your bonds.

clearstation.com

discussions about stocks and trading strategies • track an unlimited number of portfolios • smooth navigation

ClearStation is a financial-advisory Web site that helps investors make decisions by identifying and interpreting stock trends.

datek.com

free real-time quotes • after-hours trading • smooth navigation

Investors can build their own portfolios at **Datek,** using online resources to make educated decisions. The commission for most online trades is $9.99.

www.edgar-online.com

search the SEC database • historical data dating back to 1994 • smooth navigation

For up-to-date financial reports on companies, **Edgar Online** is a great place to start. Premium subscribers enjoy real-time SEC filings, insider transaction filings, and custom company watch lists.

etrade.com

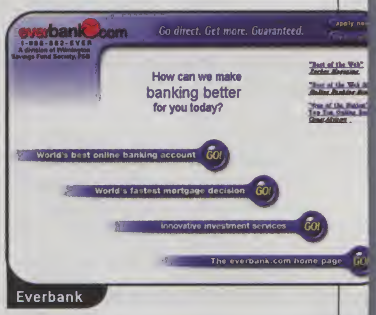
community area offers discussion groups and online events • smooth navigation

ETrade investors can learn about companies, then build and manage their own stock portfolios. Amenities include free streaming NASDAQ Level II quotes, IPO allocations, and real-time updates.

everbank.com

smooth navigation

Everbank offers free online banking services complete with interest-bearing checking accounts and a bill-pay feature. The site also offers Web-based mortgage, insurance, and investing tools.



hoovers.com

4,000 company profiles • upcoming IPOs featured • smooth navigation

Hoover's Online offers countless resources for financial research. Free tools include daily financial headlines and the Stock Screener.

ino.com

option chains • free end-of-the-day updates by e-mail • smooth navigation

Devoted to futures, options, and equities trading, **Ino.com** offers a comprehensive site that includes daily financial

headlines, quotes and charts, and lively forums.

kiplinger.com

👍 forums let users ask questions and discuss financial topics • financial software and videos • smooth navigation

Kiplinger.com contains a vast array of financial information. Departments include taxes, insurance, investments, and home. Each area includes several articles and columns.

schwab.com

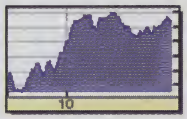
👍 24-hour customer service by phone and e-mail • special services for high-volume traders

Online investors can get help planning for college, retirement, or a rainy day at **Charles Schwab.** This site offers myriad investing options, as well as research and planning services.

stockmaster.com

👍 create custom investment profiles • message boards for investment discussions • smooth navigation

StockMaster will tell you the trading price and details of any stock or investment fund, providing instant graphs of that stock's activity. A subscription service provides access to Baseline Company Profiles of more than 8,000 companies.



wallstreetcity.com

👍 intuitive explanations of stock trends • free 30-day trial

Wall Street City's free services include quotes and graphs, real-time market commentary, and analyst reviews. Paying a monthly subscription fee adds real-time quotes, access to historical pricing data, and portfolio monitoring.

waterhouse.com

👍 offers checking accounts with electronic bill payment

At **TD Waterhouse's** Web site, the money-minded will find brokerage, banking, and mutual-fund services. Waterhouse makes company news, reports, and charts freely available to investors with inquiring minds. Online stock trading costs a flat $12 per transaction.

windowonwallstreet.com

WindowOnWallStreet.com offers professional-level stock trading services, including real-time quotes, dynamically updated charts, real-time option chains, and news. The service costs $79.95 per month and requires you to install a desktop Internet client.

wingspanbank.com

👍 smooth navigation

One of the new breed of Internet banks, **WingspanBank.com** offers a full range of banking, loan, brokerage, and insurance services. Convenient banking options include interest-bearing checking accounts with direct deposit, as well as online bill-payment services.

www.wsrn.com

👍 stock screener • links to publications on economy, equity, and markets

Wall Street Research Net offers thousands of links to help professional and private investors perform research on companies and mutual funds, as well as locate important economic data. Brokerage reports and historical stock-price data are available for a fee.

PC RESOURCES

cablemodeminfo.com

👍 helps you find a cable-ready ISP

Internet addicts considering upgrading to a cable modem—as well as users who have already made the jump—will find a cornucopia of information at **Cablemodeminfo.com.** You'll find reviews of cable-modem hardware and tips on sharing a modem between PCs.

SITE REVIEWS

dailyedeals.com

👍 smooth navigation

Before you place an order at your favorite e-commerce site, open a window to **DailyeDeals.** Its coupon pages offer coupon codes that will instantly shave $5 to $20 off the bottom line at major online retailers. The First Time area links to sites that offer substantial discounts to first-time customers.

dcresource.com

👍 message board • links to digital-camera stores

The **Digital Camera Resource Page** is an unbiased, comprehensive source of information for digital-camera buyers and owners. Shoppers will enjoy the FAQ page, buyer's guide, and reviews.

dealtime.com

👍 DealTime Mobile service lets you compare prices from a cell phone or Palm device • smooth navigation

DealTime is an independent comparison-shopping service that helps you decide where to buy online. The site aggregates prices from hundreds of merchants, auctions, and classified sites.

www.expertcity.com

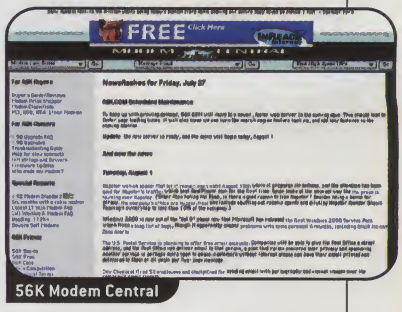
👍 smooth navigation
👎 currently no support for Mac or Unix operating systems

Expertcity promises live, 24-hour computer assistance from real human beings. When you pose a question, experts across the Internet bid for your business. Read their profiles, compare prices, then choose the expert you like.

56k.com

👍 downloads of the latest modem firmware • smooth navigation

Don't buy a new modem until you've visited **56K Modem Central.** Start with the primer on 56Kbps modems, learn the difference between technologies, then use the price shopper to find a model at the best price.



www.ftc.gov

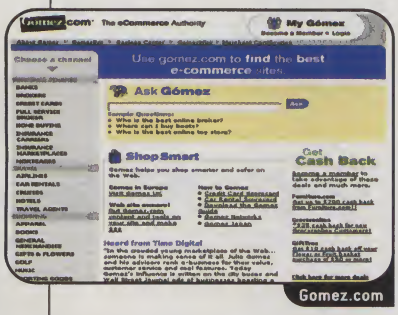
👍 smooth navigation

The **Federal Trade Commission's** Web site is packed with useful information for consumers. The content covers the spectrum of consumer fraud and how to avoid it—online and offline. Articles address online auctions and protecting yourself when shopping on the Net.

gomez.com

smooth navigation

Gomez.com offers ratings and customer reviews of e-commerce sites in two dozen categories, ranging from Web-based computer stores to drugstores, apparel shopping to online brokers. Read other customers' reviews and check their ratings on ease of use, customer confidence, and cost.



help-site.com

links to 1,000 documents
• smooth navigation

Help-Site is a great place to find FAQ lists, tutorials, manuals, and official as well as unofficial support. You'll find documentation on DOS, Windows, OS/2, and even Unix and VAX/VMS systems.

helptalk.com

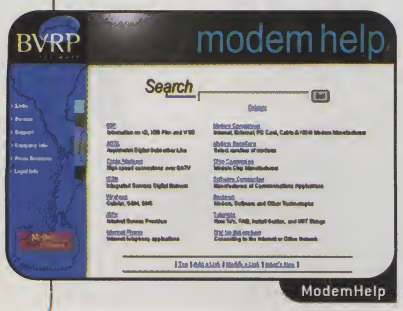
smooth navigation

Helptalk offers free assistance for most Windows software and hardware. The site offers 30 message boards where you can ask questions about applications, operating systems, and programming.

modemhelp.com

smooth navigation

ModemHelp provides technical support for modem users and a hearty list of links to other modem-related sites. You'll find information on upgrading modems, diagnostic tools, tutorials, and discussion forums.



SITE REVIEWS

nextag.com

product reviews available
• smooth navigation

NexTag is a sophisticated buying service that can help frugal shoppers find the lowest possible prices on computer equipment, electronics, books, music, and videos. Entering your ZIP code allows NexTag to calculate shipping and tax for accurate pricing.

productreviewnet.com

smooth navigation

Product ReviewNet collects abstracts of all sorts of products, including computers, appliances, sports equipment, and automobiles. Each abstract includes a citation (for magazine articles) or a link (for online reviews). The site includes a handy list of online buying guides.

www.thepubliceye.com

customer-satisfaction database
• smooth navigation

Find Internet businesses that deliver the best service—and avoid the ones that don't—with **ePublicEye.com,** a customer-service rating site. The site uses secret shoppers who patronize Internet businesses, conducting audits and rating the service of each business.

rammatters.com

Flash 4 plug-in required for maximum effects

RAM Matters humorously explains how adding memory to your computer will make you more productive, and, so the site claims, better-looking. You'll get help in determining the type of memory your computer requires, plus installation tips.

www.scambusters.com

information on viruses—real and fake

Internet ScamBusters is a site and a newsletter aiming to help Net users avoid getting cheated. Each newsletter focuses on a single type of scam, ranging from the merely annoying to the downright dangerous. Scams that target online shoppers are also covered.

usb.org

message board fields questions
• smooth navigation

Check this site for technical information about the **Universal Serial Bus,** as well as answers to frequently asked questions and information about devices that use the bus. There's information for end users as well as developers.

windrivers.com

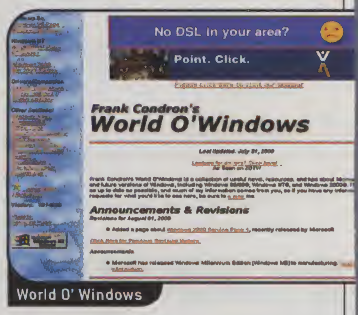
smooth navigation

WinDrivers.com is a comprehensive archive of drivers and DLL files for hard drives, sound cards, scanners, and other hardware. The site also provides links to antivirus updates and BIOS upgrades.

www.worldowindows.com

hundreds of downloadable drivers
• smooth navigation

World O' Windows is a collection of useful news, resources, and tips about current and future versions of Microsoft Windows. Information and user tips abound. The site can be invaluable if you're considering upgrading or if your recent upgrade is causing problems.



SOFTWARE SITES

accountingshop.com

get credit for your old QuickBooks or Peachtree software when you upgrade • smooth navigation

The **Accounting Shop** Web store focuses on accounting software. Shoppers can choose from an extensive catalog of high-end, midrange, and small-business packages. Easy-to-understand charts let you compare

chumbo.com

If you're looking for a one-stop shop for software, visit **Chumbo.com**. It's stocked with an assortment of business and developer tools, utilities, graphics applications, games, children's software, and home and reference programs. In addition to tons of Windows and Mac programs, the site features a Linux Store area that sells applications for the popular alternative OS. You'll also find an array of DVD movies here, in categories ranging from animé to western.

A special calendar keeps you informed about upcoming software and DVD releases; you can preorder these items for shipment the day they are released. The Rebate Center features links to software with money-saving deals from the manufacturer. And if you're looking for a software gift, check the Staff Picks page, which offers suggestions from software experts—and their pets.

Our order was shipped via two-day FedEx for a nominal $3.95 shipping fee. The My Chumbo feature let us track the status of the order and review a complete order history.

CHUMBO.COM
Main focus: Computer software
Additional categories: DVD movies
Number of products offered: 15,000
Areas of development: Personalization features, product recommendations, and editorial content are planned.

products by type, function, or price.

beyond.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Beyond.com presents a cornucopia of choices for PC, Mac, and PDA users. In addition to traditional boxed titles, the site sells downloadable software from major publishers. The site also offers a respectable selection of computer hardware, including digital cameras, PDAs, and storage devices.

Beyond.com

buycheapsoftware.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The name says it all: Here you can **Buy Cheap Software.** This site offers a relatively small selection—about 300 titles—but it does sell popular programs from well-known publishers, including Adobe, Corel, Lotus, and Microsoft.

buyonet.com

site available in six languages • software available in 20 languages • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Buyonet specializes in downloadable commercial software. Hundreds of business applications, utilities, and games are available for download. For a nominal fee, shoppers can order a CD backup of purchased software.

buyonet
eAllianceDivision
download store
The eAlliance Division offers complete global electronic commerce solutions for any merchant selling digital products over the Internet.
Visit our site to understand how we can help you reach your customers, all over the world.
Buyonet

SITE REVIEWS

chumbo.com

Best Site winner this month. See p. 194.

cws.internet.com

free e-mail summary of software updates • smooth navigation

Stroud's Consummate Winsock Applications List is the ultimate one-stop download site for the latest and greatest in Internet software. Find and download Web development tools, browsers, and chat clients. You'll find comprehensive file lists, ratings, and extensive reviews.

dealdealdeal.com

smooth navigation

Dealdealdeal offers office suites, utility software, graphics programs, operating systems, games, and edutainment software. Although the selection isn't massive, shoppers will find a nice mix of new software and older titles—handy, whether you're looking for Microsoft Office 2000 or Office 97.

Dealdealdeal

download.com

smooth navigation

When you're looking for shareware or free software, **Download.com** is a fine starting point. Well-written newsletters and down-to-earth reviews will help you find the perfect programs. The site links to tens of thousands of files of PC, Mac, Linux, Windows CE, and Palm software.

ebworld.com

can search for age-appropriate games • lists release dates for new game titles • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Electronics Boutique is a gamer's paradise. Here you'll find game software and add-ons for your PC and your Mac, as well as titles for Dreamcast, Nintendo 64, and other game consoles. Check out the new releases, best-sellers, and gaming news.

freewarefiles.com

smooth navigation

Windows users who want great software without having to spend any money can start at **Freeware Files.** This Web site offers links to gratis business applications, screen savers, games, and many other types of software. It features quick links to the most popular giveaways.

jumbo.com

smooth navigation

Jumbo is the perfect name for this monstrous file archive. In addition to programs for sale, you'll find thousands of commercial-application demos, along with loads of shareware and free software.

mightyscholar.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

It can be hard to find educational software that's right for your children's ages and learning needs. **Mighty Scholar** sells handpicked educational software, categorized by age range and subject.

999central.com

buy seven programs, get one free • smooth navigation • good return policy

The **999central.com** site offers 500 programs, each for $9.99. Shoppers can find a wide variety of software here, although educational, entertainment, and lifestyle programs are the most common.

www.pdfstore.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The **PDF Store** specializes in software for creating and working with Portable Document Format files. The site sells shareware and commercial software for immediate download. The selection includes PDF conversion, management, printing, and development software—a convenient, focused selection.

soft4u.com

free shipping on orders over $300 • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Soft4U specializes in software for businesses, resellers, schools, and government offices. The company offers same-day shipping on most software. Special prices are available for staff and students at academic institutions.

Soft4U

www.softwarebuyline.com

free shipping on orders of more than $50 • smooth navigation • good return policy

Software BuyLine has a massive selection of software titles for Windows, Mac OS, and Linux. The site sells Windows CE and Palm applications, too. Prices here are usually among the best. You'll also get easy access to product rebate information.

Software BuyLine

tucows.com

mirror sites speed downloads • smooth navigation

Bovine bliss: **Tucows** is an incredible archive of freeware and shareware. The category list and reviews make it easy to find the software you're seeking. In the Online Store, you can pay for, register, and download commercial software.

ONLINE AUCTIONS

auctions.cnet.com

well-defined categories make items easy to locate • smooth navigation

At **CNET Auctions,** a site dedicated to computer-product auctions, you can bid on the hardware and software listed or put any computer items you'd like to sell on the block. Sellers range from individuals to well-known companies.

auctions.com

smooth navigation

Auctions.com hosts user-to-user auctions in categories from stamps to pet supplies. The computer auction listings offer a respectable quantity of PC hardware and software.

auctions.goto.com

trend-watch and message boards • smooth navigation

GoTo Auctions puts at your disposal a cross-auction search engine that hunts for items in 14 categories.

auctions.yahoo.com

no charge to buy or sell • smooth navigation

Yahoo's user-to-user auction site offers hundreds of thousands of items in diverse categories ranging from computer hardware to motorcycles. Collector clubs, message boards, and live chat let sellers and buyers talk, ask questions, and trade items.

auctions.zdnet.com

the Auction Agent will notify you when a new auction meets your criteria • smooth navigation

The auction site of **ZDNet,** *Computer Shopper*'s parent company, offers primarily computer hardware and software. Categories include consumer electronics, gaming, domains, and services. You'll find user-to-user auctions, as well as new and used items offered by well-known businesses.

bid.com

The **Bid.com** business-to-user equipment auction site offers desktop and notebook computers, monitors, upgrades, cameras, and home electronics. Equipment may be new or refurbished.

ebay.com

smooth navigation

With half a million new auctions every day, **eBay** is the Internet's most popular auction arena. The site is packed with unique services: All purchases are insured up to $200, and Billpoint lets even occasional sellers accept credit-card and electronic-check payments.

ewanted.com

unique process • smooth navigation

"Turning auctions upside down" is the goal of **eWanted.** The site allows potential buyers to list the items they're looking for. Sellers can submit offers, bidding down the price to earn the business. Categories include computer equipment, antiques, baby items, and real estate.

haggle.com

smooth navigation

Haggle.com is a user-to-user auction site that has nearly 40 computer-related categories, plus "other stuff" auctions ranging from musical instruments to automobiles. Sellers will appreciate the free basic listings.

itrack.com

auction news area

Simple to use, **iTrack.com** searches online auctions so you don't have to. Free memberships allow you to select five patterns (combinations of an auction site and an item) at a given time; for $25 per year, you can search 10 patterns at a time; and for $50, 20 patterns at a time. You can choose from 14 auction sites.

SITE REVIEWS

tradeout.com

smooth navigation

TradeOut.com describes itself as a "business-to-business exchange for excess inventory and idle assets." It helps companies buy and sell surplus goods—from computers to car parts to construction supplies. Most items are sold at auction, but others are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

ubid.com

smooth navigation

UBid's business-to-user auction house offers computers, electronics, housewares, sports items, jewelry, and gifts. If you can't wait several days to learn if you've won, click on the Auctions Closing This Hour link.

SMALL-BUSINESS RESOURCES

atyouroffice.com

free delivery on all orders of more than $25 • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The impressive **AtYourOffice.com** site offers everything for the office, from the essential to the mundane—30,000 products in all. You can limit searches to products that are generic brands, eco-friendly, or manufactured by women- or minority-owned businesses.

businessplans.org

links to franchise information, public-relations resources, market analysis, and other sites

The **Center for Business Planning** offers a library of real business plans that you can download and review offline, an automated tool that can evaluate your marketing strategy, and a massive collection of links of interest to anyone starting a business.

consultlink.com

consultant reference checks available • smooth navigation

ConsultLink is a directory service that helps businesses find contractors and independent consultants in a wide variety of high-tech fields, such as technology strategy, programming, and technical writing. ConsultLink charges a fee to access each profile. A flat-fee option allows unlimited profile views.

directdeposit.com

Since 1991, **National Payment Corp.** has been providing direct-deposit services for small and medium-size businesses. Using a secure Web browser, you can submit payroll for direct deposit to your employees' bank accounts. The site can exchange data with more than two dozen accounting programs.

efax.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

The **eFax.com** site gives you a personal fax and voice-mail number and delivers incoming messages by e-mail. The free basic service lets you receive an unlimited number of faxes. For a monthly fee, eFax Plus lets you send faxes and convert incoming faxes to text.

e-stamp.com

you don't have to be online to print postage

buying postage *requires special* hardware

E-Stamp lets you buy postage over the Internet, then print that postage on your printer. You can use E-Stamp to send first-class, Priority Mail, Express Mail, and parcel-post items. The site sells envelopes, labels, postage scales, and other mailing supplies.

www.fedworld.gov/taxsear.htm

smooth navigation • order federal tax information on CD-ROM

At **FedWorld** you'll find downloadable tax forms for tax years 1992 through 1999 and instructions on filling them

out, as well as IRS publications, tax tables, and tax regulations.

iprint.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

With the help of **iPrint.com,** creating personalized items for business is a snap. Place your mark on stationery, rubber stamps, business cards, and sticky notepads, or create your own promotional items like key chains, T-shirts, and golf balls.

officebase.com

smooth navigation
orders may take three weeks to fill

From office machines to snacks, this office-supply store sells just about anything you could need in the workplace. **Office Base** is simple but effective, making it easy to find products.

onlinepayroll.com

Online Business Services will help any business become more efficient and receive more than 80 financial reports. Online Payroll can receive payroll information by telephone, fax, modem, or direct link with your electronic time clock.

paycheckcity.com

Paycheck City provides Web-based calculators to verify the accuracy of payroll checks. Employers can use the site to complete W-4 forms, and employees can verify what they should be paying in federal, state, and Social Security taxes. New tools include an hourly calculator, a bonus calculator, and a stock-option calculator.

www.pointofsale.com

Pointofsale.com specializes in retail essentials: point-of-sale software and hardware, bar-code scanners, magnetic-stripe readers, and receipt printers. FAQs answer questions about bar codes, POS systems, and cash drawers.

smartship.com

helps find your nearest package drop-off site

limited information about smaller carriers

SmartShip makes it easy to select the right carrier for your shipments. Enter the weight and other details about your package, and the site will help you choose the best major carrier, whether your priority is speed or cost.

www.ssa.gov

smooth navigation

The **Social Security Administration's** site can make the necessary task of paying Social Security understandable to small-business owners. The Guide for Employers offers detailed help with employer wage-filing responsibilities. The FAQ answers questions about documentation and filing deadlines.

stamps.com

no special hardware required
must be online to print postage

Stamps.com lets customers buy postage online and print it using an inkjet or laser printer. You can send items first-class, Priority, and Express Mail. Delivery confirmation and certified mail are also available.

usa.net

USA.net can set up a Web post office for your business, letting you and your employees have instant access to e-mail from any Web browser. The long list of standard and premium features includes necessities such as spell-checking and language translation.

www.virtualpayroll.com

Virtual Payroll simplifies the cycle of payroll and taxes for small businesses. Through this secure site, company and employee information is entered to set up initial payroll accounts; with periodic updates, employees are paid by direct deposit within 48 hours.

webex.com

offers Web-based business collaboration
requires a special plug-in

WebEx is an online collaboration system that hosts thousands of daily meetings. Share documents and applications with colleagues who have your meeting-room password and the WebEx plug-in. Free "virtual offices" offer personalized conference rooms with online calendar, address-book, document-storage, and directory tools.

CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

bestbuy.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Freshly restocked after a massive overhaul, **Best Buy's** site offers a fine selection of home audio and video components, portable audio gadgets, digital and traditional cameras, camcorders, and accessories.

consumer-direct.com

smooth navigation

Shopping for something simple, such as a surge protector? Or complicated, like a C-Band satellite receiver? Either way, **Consumer Direct Warehouse** provides a selection of brands to explore.

Consumer Direct Warehouse

crutchfield.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

In business for 26 years, **Crutchfield** assembles an impressive catalog of audio and video products for your home and car. Inexpensive two-day shipping is standard for most orders. The extensive Info Center offers glossaries, guides to choosing components, and installation tips.

800.com

review your complete order history • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

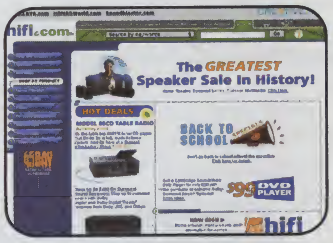
The **800.com** site specializes in video and audio systems, personal

hifi.com

COMPUTER SHOPPER Best Site Award October 2000

Hifi.com has home-audio and home-theater products to please budget shoppers and discriminating audiophiles alike. The site also sells televisions, portable audio devices, DVD players, and movies. A series of unique features and policies set it apart from competing online consumer-electronics stores.

If the product you buy from Hifi.com is offered at a lower price at another major dealer within 30 days of your purchase, Hifi.com will automatically refund the difference. In addition, the site's bonus program lets you "trade in" your older home-theater equipment for new items: Auction off used equipment on eBay, and you'll receive a $50 credit to your Hifi.com account.



Optional extended warranties are offered on products, but with an unusual twist: If you buy an extended warranty and never use it, the company refunds 50 percent of what you paid for the warranty in the form of a store credit.

The Installation Support section of the site delivers detailed advice on installing components, placing speakers, and troubleshooting your new home-entertainment system. In addition, Hifi.com offers free shipping and a no-questions-asked 45-day return policy on most products. The company will even pay for return shipping.

HIFI.COM
Main focus: Home theater, home audio, portable electronics
Additional categories: Phones, multimedia, auctions
Number of products offered: 800
Areas of development: Recently launched sites HerHifi.com for women, and CustomHifi.com, a B2B site for the custom-installation market

electronics, video games, and movies. See side-by-side comparisons of products. The selection includes digital cameras, televisions, and home and car stereos.

etown.com

smooth navigation
shipping costs and return policies can vary among etown.com partners

Consumer electronics is the focus at **etown.com,** a site offering gadgets such as cordless phones and flat-screen televisions. The site also serves up consumer-electronics news, informative features, and a knowledge bank that explains how to buy, use, and troubleshoot equipment.

gadgetuniverse.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

You'll discover gadgets galore at **Gadget Universe**—from useful ones (clocks, stereos, and phones) to fun toy gizmos. The selection includes items for your car, home, and office.

giantsavings.com

smooth navigation

GiantSavings.com offers a wide selection of home electronics, ranging from DVD players to PDAs.

globe-mart.com

smooth navigation • good return policy

Global Mart's electronics area offers audio/video components, flat-panel displays, digital cameras, and multifunction printers. The selection also includes handheld PCs and uninterruptible power supplies.

hifi.com

Best Site winner this month. See p. 197.

igo.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The **iGo** site sells electronic necessities for folks on the go, including PDAs, cellular phones, and carrying cases. The extensive catalog of add-ons includes antennae, batteries, and other accessories for users of mobile digital devices.

SITE REVIEWS

va.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

ValueAmerica offers an array of home-entertainment products, including audio and video equipment, cameras, and communications products. Plus, you'll find movies, games, and other media. Extended service plans are available, and online shoppers enjoy free shipping.

theweb-shop.com

easy ordering

Shop **The Web Shop Superstore** for a wide variety of home-electronics offerings, including computers, home-office equipment, cameras, camcorders, and home and car audio.

CAMERAS

abbeycamera.com

links to manufacturer sites • smooth navigation • good return policy

Abbey Camera's catalog of more than 10,000 cameras and accessory items will impress even veteran photographers. The options range from 35mm cameras to medium- and large-format models, darkroom supplies, and professional gear.

keh.com

message board offers technical advice • smooth navigation • good return policy

In business for 20 years, **KEH Camera Brokers** peddles new items as well as good-condition used equipment. The automated buying service gives an immediate quote on what KEH will pay for your used equipment.

www.normancamera.com

good return policy

From point-and-shoot models to high-tech digital cameras, you're likely to find it in **Norman Camera's** catalog. See a large selection of film scanners, video cameras, and accessories.

photoalley.com

tips and how-to articles • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

From Agfa to Yashica, if it has a lens, it's at **Photo Alley.** This site features a catalog of more than 11,000 products, ranging from cameras and gadget bags to camcorders and even binoculars.

ritzcamera.com

free shipping on orders of more than $50 • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

In addition to offering cameras and accessories, **Ritz Camera** also sells photo albums and frames. Shoppers with a retail location nearby can see their photos online in one hour, then order reprints or merchandise with a photo on it.

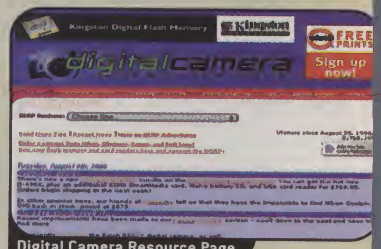
servicemerchandise.com

smooth navigation • good return policy
many items only available for in-store pickup

In business for nearly 40 years, **Service Merchandise** is a catalog showroom offering jewelry, home accessories, and travel items. The Cameras area of its Web site sells 35mm, digital, and Advanced Photo System (APS) cameras, as well as binoculars and telescopes.

Choosing and Buying a Digital Camera

- You can find a wide variety of digital cameras for every budget and type of user, from $40 toys to $4,000 professional models. Make sure you buy at the right level for your needs. Most consumer-level cameras cost $300 to $700.
- You'll need a camera that can interface with your computer. Some cameras transfer images to your computer over a serial, USB, SCSI, or infrared connection. Other cameras save images on removable media (such as floppy disks, SmartMedia cards, or SuperDisks) that can be read directly on a PC.
- You can find reviews of digital cameras, sample photos, and answers to your questions at PCPhotoReview.com, DigitalCameras.com, the Digital Camera Resource Page ***(www.dcresource.com)***, and of course, at our own site, computershopper.com. Our parent company ZDNet also has a Digital Camera Supercenter ***(http://cgi.zdnet.com/slink?47910)*** for finding and buying a camera, and printing photos.
- Once you've made a choice, use price-comparison sites such as DealTime.com or NexTag.com to find the best prices on cameras, media, and accessories. Understand the seller's return policy: Depending on the seller, you may be able to return the camera if you don't like it.
- If you don't need the latest and greatest model, visit online auction sites, where you'll find older models and refurbished units. Try uBid ***(www.ubid.com)***, eBay ***(www.ebay.com)***, and ZDNet Auctions ***(auctions.zdnet.com)***.
- Online photo-finishers Shutterfly.com, Snapfish.com, and Ofoto ***(www.ofoto.com)***, can make prints from your digital pictures.
- If your pictures will be viewed solely online, a camera with 1-megapixel or lower resolution is fine. If you'll be making prints from your digital pictures, a 2- or 3-megapixel camera will produce higher-quality prints. The chart at ***www.digitalcameras.com/printers_resolution.asp*** shows the resolution necessary to make prints at 4x6, 8x10, and other common sizes.



Digital Camera Resource Page

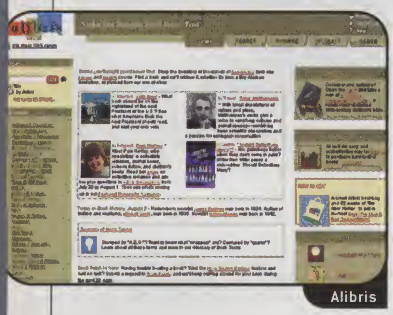
BOOKS AND MUSIC

SITE REVIEWS

www.alibris.com

Book Hound tool will search for a book for a month and e-mail you • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Alibris offers one-stop searching and browsing of hundreds of independent booksellers around the globe. You don't have to be a book collector to appreciate the massive selection in categories from romance to computers.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audible.com

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Audible delivers the next generation of books on tape. Buy and download audio programs, such as *The Wall Street Journal* or best-selling books. Then listen to the programs on your PC or a portable player.

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With millions of titles in its catalog, **Barnes & Noble's** site is a book lover's dream. If the book you want is out of print, don't despair: Barnes & Noble has associations with used-book sellers across the country.

bookfinder.com

mailing list for booksellers

BookFinder is a search engine that scans the databases of 15,000 booksellers to find new, used, rare, and out-of-print books. It's a quick way to search many independent bookstores at once for hard-to-find titles.

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If you've ever gotten lost in one of **Borders'** enormous retail stores, you'll appreciate this vast site. It offers a selection of 10 million books, CDs, and videos. Check out the In the News listings to find today's topical books.

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CDnow is a megasite offering an extensive catalog of titles on vinyl, cassette, and CD. RealAudio sound clips and reviews are available for many of the discs. The Album Advisor learns your musical tastes and suggests other bands you'll enjoy.

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CDworld sells software, video games, movies, and music—more than half a million items in all. You can get movies on videotape, DVD, laserdisc, or movie CD. Video-game choices include Dreamcast, Nintendo, and PlayStation, as well as PC and Mac titles.

checkout.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

The Checkout Entertainment Network offers music, movies, and video games, wrapped up in an entertaining shopping experience. The site serves up featured artists, quizzes, trivia, and lists of top sellers. You'll find plenty of detail about each item, complete with an editor's review, ratings, and technical details.

codysbooks.com

world's largest selection of Passover books and merchandise • 20 to 30 percent discounts on best-sellers

An independent bookstore based in Berkeley, Calif., **Cody's Books** offers a searchable catalog of its 150,000 in-stock titles. In addition, the store can order any in-print book, plus books published in some other countries. The site offers thoughtful recommendations and reading lists.

emusic.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering

EMusic.com offers downloadable MP3 music in a wide variety of genres. You can purchase an individual song, usually for 99 cents, or download an entire album for about $9.

www.express.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Express.com sells DVD movies, music, video games, and electronics. You'll find plenty of information about each title, and preordering hot releases is a breeze. The Auction area offers collectible goodies from the worlds of television, film, and sports, such as movie props and autographed scripts.

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ktel.com

online radio station • $6 CDs in the bargain bin • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

Six departments at **K-Tel** offer a variety of merchandise with an emphasis on entertainment. At the custom CD store, shoppers can design their own compilation discs. The music store offers soundtracks and box sets of popular favorites.

muzicdepot.com

smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

From electronica to jazz to gospel, **MuzicDepot.com** has just about any in-print CD or cassette, as well as information about out-of-print titles. Tell the Muzic Advizor about your tastes, and it will recommend other artists you may enjoy. The site also offers movies in the DVD and VHS formats.

powells.com

rare books • online reading group • smooth navigation • good return policy

Book lovers know **Powell's** as an independently owned megastore in Portland, Ore. You can search Powell's renowned selection of new and used books at its Web store. Browse through the staff picks and recommendation center for more great reads.

samgoody.com

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Sam Goody offers movies, music, and more. The "more" includes software, video games, sheet music, and related books.

www.towerrecords.com

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The **Tower Records** site offers a huge selection of music and videos. The search tool lets you find music based on the artist, the album, or even the name of a single song. The Pulse online magazine includes reviews and interviews from pop and classical artists.

virginmega.com

daily music news and gossip • new releases featured weekly • smooth navigation • easy ordering • good return policy

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